

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

May 24, 2005

CONCURRENT PLANNING

Achieving timely permanence for children is one of the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) primary outcome goals. Concurrent Planning became federal law in 1997 as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. It requires counties to provide reasonable efforts to reunify children with their families and, at the same time, to plan alternative permanency in case reunification cannot safely occur. For children who enter out-of-home care, DCFS' first priority is to reunify them with their birth parent(s). However, Concurrent Planning is a strategy to alternatively plan for a child's timely legal permanence, which is critical to a child's development and well-being and is also effective in decreasing the likelihood that children will languish in foster care.

To improve permanency outcomes for children, DCFS has embarked upon a comprehensive redesign of its service delivery system and concurrent planning process. Concurrent Planning Redesign is being piloted in five offices throughout the County.

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Systems changes take time and the Concurrent Planning Redesign Pilot represents the beginning of a systems change that encompasses fundamental work shifts and cultural changes that include a definition of legal permanency limited to reunification, adoption and legal guardianship. Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, formerly known as long-term foster care, is not an acceptable permanent plan.

Departmental data over the past year shows that approximately 40% of family reunifications occurred within one year; 31% within two years; and the remaining 29% occurred beyond two years. Regarding adoptions, approximately 14% finalized in less than 2 years of initial out-of-home placement; an additional 25% finalized in less than three years; 21% finalized in less than four years; and 40% finalized in four years or more. There are currently over 16,000 children receiving permanent placement services. Over 13,000 of these children have been in care for more than two years, the majority of whom do not reside in legally permanent homes. In addition, an average of 150 children emancipate from DCFS care every month. Research indicates that children who emancipate without a permanent family to provide ongoing support and stability end up disproportionately homeless, unemployed and incarcerated. Therefore, there must be a sense of urgency imbedded into the permanency planning process.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Children and Family Services to report back to the Board in 180 days on:

- (1) The status of the Concurrent Planning Redesign Pilot;
- (2) The feasibility of expanding the Concurrent Planning Redesign Pilot County-wide.

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